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THE BRAYTON HOMESTEAD

1714—1914

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THE BRAYTON HOMESTEAD





THE BRAYTON HOMESTEAD
(Front View)

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THE BRAYTON HOMESTEAD

1714 — 1914

A Sketch by

Elizabeth Hitchcock Brayton

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THE BRAYTON HOMESTEAD

1714 — 1914

This is the place. Stand still, my steed,
Let me review the scene,
And summon from the shadowy Past,
The forms that once have been.

Longfellow.

Within the archives of the Town Clerk's office in Somerset is preserved a chart, made about 1695, showing the first divisions of the land in Shawomet, an Indian name by which this territory was first known to the white man. Two hundred years have passed since the deed of a part of this land, which today we term, with much affection, "The Brayton Homestead," came into the Brayton name;

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yet how little do we know of its story or of the people who have tilled its soil!

Although we are familiar with the history of New England, and the growth of her colonies, it seems necessary to note a few of its incidents that we may more readily trace the transfer of this land from the Indians to our ancestors.

After the outbreak of King Philip's War a succession of battles followed, and the blood of the red men, so thoroughly aroused, led them to deeds of most atrocious barbarity. King Philip, the greatest of Indian warriors, was slain in the summer of 1676 and a few weeks later the most desperate of all Indian conflicts ended. The consequences of this war were disastrous and far-reaching. Six hundred of the inhabitants were either killed in battle or murdered by the enemy, and, in addition, an enormous debt was contracted, twelve towns were destroyed, and about six

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hundred buildings, including thirty-four dwellings in the town of Swansey, were burned. Only six houses now remained in that town, and so reduced was it that it was described as "desolate as a wilderness," and so near was the land in Shawomet about which this article is written, that we must picture it near the route of travel during this fierce and bloody warfare.

The General Court of Plymouth, realizing the heavy debt incurred by this war, not only to the several towns so closely connected with it, but to the government also, and not being able to meet the debt, issued the following order, made at its second session held on the thirteenth day of July 1677:—

"Whereas the late war has been very chargeable to the several towns of this government, and many debts occasioned thereby are still due, this court, considering that, by the good providence of God, there are several tracts of conquered lands, do therefore order, that

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Showmett lands and Assonet shall be sold to defray the present debts, and that all other such lands shall be either sold, if chapmen appear to buy them, within a year or two, so as to settle plantations thereon in an orderly way, to promote the public worship of God, and our own common good; and the produce thereof shall be divided to the several towns in this government, according to their different disbursements toward the aforesaid war, and what of the aforesaid lands shall then remain unsold shall be divided to every one of our towns, their part according to the rate aforementioned; also, the committee to make sale as aforesaid shall give account of any their actings therein, to the next General Court after such their actings."

At a much earlier date, the Plymouth Government had promoted the organization of companies called Proprietors, who were given the power to buy lands and to sell and divide such lands among themselves by mutual agreement. These companies of Proprietors were required to elect one of their number to act as clerk to keep a book of records in

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which the various divisions of their lands must be recorded in the prescribed legal form. "These entries thus became permanent records of real estate, to be transmitted and remain to posteritie." To a company of like Proprietors were sold the Shawomet lands, which we today bound on the south by Mount Hope Bay, on the west by Lees River and the town of Swansea, on the north by Dighton, and on the east by Taunton River, which territory includes the present town of Somerset.

In Somerset will be found the original book of records of the Proprietors of the Shawomet Purchase upon whose title page we read as follows:—

"The Book of Records of Shawomat Lands Belonging
to ye

Purchasars of ye said Shawomat Neck and ye
Other Lands partaining to ye said
Neck Caled The Out Let.

This Book was Begun in ye yeare 1680. By
Increase Robinson

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Clark ffor The Said Purchasars.
The grand Deed of the sale of Showamett lands
is committed to
Capt John Willyames to be kept by him
for the
use of the Proprietors of sd lands
so long as they see cause,
Attest.
Saml. Sprague Clerk.”

The Proprietors divided the Shawomet Purchase into three parts or sections, namely:—The Little or Boston Neck, which embraced, approximately, what is now known as Brayton Point Farm; the Great Neck, which extended northerly to the road now known as Read Street; and the Out Let Lands, which extended from this boundary, northerly to the Taunton land, now Dighton. At the first meeting of the Proprietors, held at Plymouth March 6, 1677, by a joint agreement it was voted that each of these divisions should be laid out into thirty and one shares

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or lots, one of which should be in a convenient place for the use of the ministry. “As alsoe it is Agreed that three men be chose to be a Committee who shall have power to order such prudentialls as are necessary for the good of the whole Societie as to the settling the bounds between theire lands and the lands of Swanzy in the best way they Can and to procure an Artist to survey said lands to be lotted out and to lay them out as aforesaid; making such allowance in quantity to such shares as shall not fall out to be so good land as the other shares are and also to lay out such Convenient highways as on theire View and survey shall to them seeme most convenient.”

Captain John Williams, Isaac Little, and Thomas Lincoln were chosen to serve on this committee and accordingly the divisions of the land were made, each lot in the Little Neck containing five acres, each in the Great Neck forty-five acres and each in the Out Let

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thirty-six acres. This article calls your attention to the lots numbered 11, 12, and 13, in the division of the Great Neck, and the chart shows the original owners of them, no one of whom became a permanent resident upon the land allotted to him.

In 1692, the first transfer of these lots is recorded, when John Williams, in consideration of one lot lying at a place called Labor in Vain, another lot in the Little Neck of Shawomet, and forty pounds of current money of New England, exchanged his lots, numbered 7 and 12 in the Great Neck, with William Slead, who, about 1680, had come from Rhode Island and purchased land in the Out Let division. During this same year, 1692, Isaac Little exchanged his original lot, numbered 8, and took in its place lot numbered 12, which William Slead had recently acquired from John Williams. There are no deeds recorded of many of the transfers of the

First Road

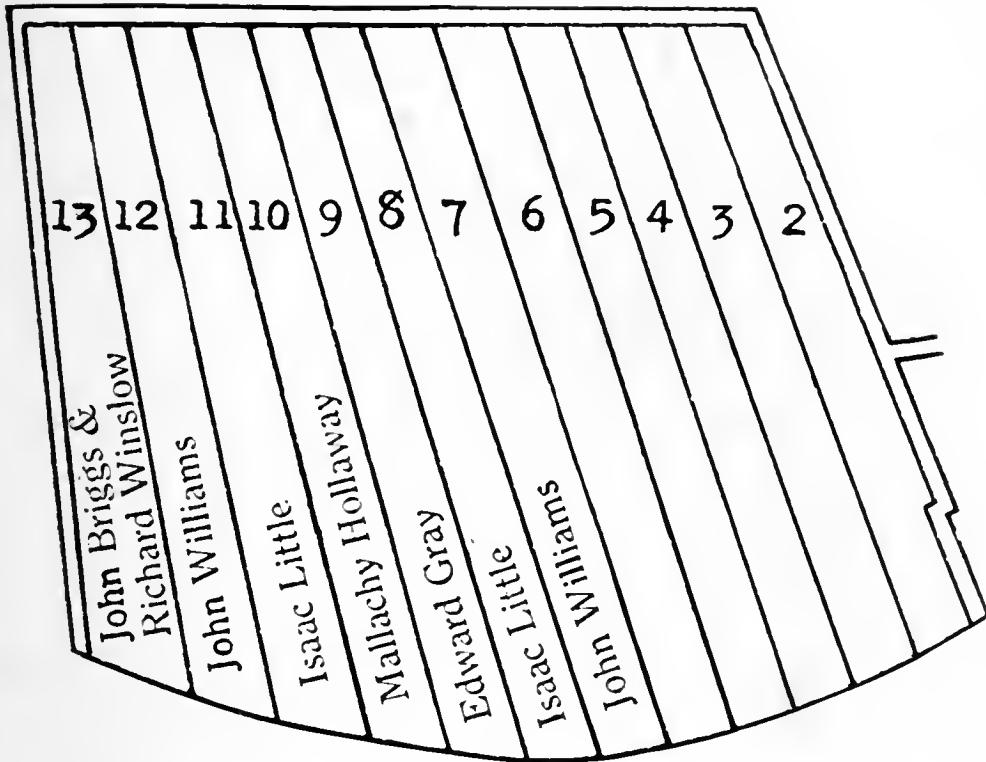


CHART
As described on page 12



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lots in Shawomet. Mallachy Hollaway apparently did not claim his original lot numbered 10, for in 1698, after the Agents of the Proprietors had made a new survey of the undivided and unclaimed lands in the Great Neck, this lot came into the possession of Isaac Little and William Slead by allotment, the title being transferred from Mallachy Hollaway to them. In the same way William Slead acquired the title to lot numbered 9, originally in the name of Edward Gray.

The Shawomet records tell us that “The Seventh, Eighth, ninth and half the tenth Lott, All belonging to one man, are eighty two pole Broad at ye head to a stake & stones in the middle of ye head of ye tenth Lott at ye highway from thence Ranging South Sixty three Degrees & a half Easterly to a heap of stones in ye middle of ye ffoot of ye said tenth lott near ye Beach.” This must have been the farm owned by William Slead. “The

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other half of the tenth and ye eleventh & twelfth Lott all belonging to one man are fifty eight pole and a half Broad at the head to a white oak tree marked XII standing by ye Highway from thence ye range between the twelfth & the 13th lots runs South Degrees Easterly to a heap of stones by a tree marked at ye Beach." This was the farm belonging to Isaac Little. He also acquired in 1698, by allotment, the north half of lot 13 originally belonging to Richard Winslow and in 1711 John Briggs sold the south half of this lot 13 to William Slead.

Isaac Little, who died in Marshfield November 24, 1699, left no will, but in the disposition of his estate in 1712 this land in Shawomet was assigned to his sons Nathaniel and William Little. In 1713, Nathaniel Little of Plymouth, mariner, made his brother William his attorney and at an early date William Little proceeded to sell their farm in

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Shawomet to Preserved Brayton of Portsmouth, Rhode Island, grandson of Francis Brayton the pioneer of that name in America.

The first definite agreement in regard to his purchase of this farm of one hundred and thirty-eight acres from William Little was embodied in the articles drawn up and signed July 21, 1714, the legible part of which reads as follows:—

Articles of Agreement made & concluded this 21st day of July Anno Domini 1714 between William Little of Plimouth in ye County of Plimouth of y^e one part and preserved Brayton of Portsmouth in Rhoad Island on the other part Witnesseth that the said William Little doth Covenant and Bind and oblige himself to give or pass: On or before the first day of march Next ensueing a suffecient Lawfull deed and Conveyance of a certain ffarm or Tract of land lyeing in Shawomett in y^e Township of Swansey lyeing between M^r Slads farm whereon he now Dwells and M^r Daniel Wilbores Containing about one hundred and Thirty seven (or Thirty Eight) acres and of one share or Right in the Eighty acres of land layd out for the Use of a minister or Publick use of the Pro-

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prietty in s^d Shawomet to y^e true performance of the above coven^t on his part the s^d Little doth bind himself & his heires in the penal sum of fifteen Hundred pounds to be forfeited on failure therein & payd to the s^d Brayton his heires executors or Adminitr^s: And the said Preserved Brayton on the other part doth Covenant bind & oblige himself his heires executors & Adm^s to pay or cause to be payd & delivered unto the said William Little his heires exec^s Adm^s or assignes One Black Stallion agreed for and valued at Twenty pounds money and fifty pounds money three days from the date hereof & Thirty pounds more within 14 dayes from the date hereof and One Hundred pound on or before the Middle of october next And one hundred pounds more on or before the Twenty fifth day of December next if said Brayton Can Possible get s^d Hundred pounds or hyre the same on or before that time if not then to pay on or before the the first day of march next ensueing and allso on s^d first day of march to pay s^d Little three Hundred & ninety pounds unless s^d Little shall then be deceased and uncapable of giveing Deeds as aboves^d & niether he s^d Little nor his heires executors nor Administr^s shall pass a Legall Deed as affores^d In which ease it is Muttually agreed that s^d Little or his heires Executrs or Adm^rs shall Pay to s^d Brayton or his heires All the moneyes that s^d Little or any by or under him shall Receive of said

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Brayton by virtue of these presents on or before the
s^d first day of March with Interest for the same
& shall

after these presents

And it is further agreed if s^d Brayton pay the ninety
pounds before mentioned on the first day of have
to be conbinned in bond a year longer upon Interest)
And after doth covenant & bind himself his
heires ex^rs (at the interest now ing said deed) on
or before s^d first day of March next upon suffi-
cient bonds & security for the paym^t of three hundred

to said Little his heires execut^rs & Adm^rs viz^t
fifty pounds each year from thence on the first day of
March till s^d three hundred pounds be fully payd To
the true performance of have said covenant &
obligation on his part. The s^d Brayton doth bind &
obldg himself his heires executors & Adm^rs in the
penal sum of fifteen Hundred pounds forfeited on
failure therein and payd to s^d Little his heires execu-
tors & Adminis^rs.

In witness whereof the partyes to these presents
have Interchangeably set their hands and seales the
day and year aboves^d.

Signed sealed and delivered } William Little (S)
In presence of us } Preserved Brayton (S)
William Anthony }
Mathew howard

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In one disposition of the land in Rhode Island owned by Preserved Brayton and dated August 5, 1714, he is called "of Portsmouth," while in another, dated November 13, 1714, he is termed "late of Portsmouth." These references certify to us, within a few months, the time he established his residence in Massachusetts.

The terms of agreement between William Little and Preserved Brayton proved satisfactory and the deed, of which the following is a copy, was signed and transferred on March 2, 1714/5:—

To all People to whom these presents shall come Greeting Know ye that I William Little of Plimouth in the County of Plimouth for & in Consideration of the full and Just sum of nine hundred & ninety pounds to me in hand well and truely payd by Preserved brayton late of Portsmouth on Rhoad Island now of Swanzeey in the County of Bristol y^e receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged & the s^d Brayton his heires & assignes for ever Discharged have bargained and sold

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and by these pr'sents Do grant Enfeoff Convey and Confirm unto the s^d Preserved Brayton his heires and assigns forever all that a certaine ffarm or Tract of land lyeing and being in Shawomet in the Township of Swansey Containing in the whole about one Hundred Thirty seven or Thirty eight Acres more or less being bounded on y^e East by Taunton River on the North by the lands of William Slead on the south and west by the Roads or wayes Excepting halfe a forty five acre lott of William Sleade contained within s^d boundaryes the granted premises containing more perticularly two forty five acre lotts being in Number the Eleventh & Twelfth Lotts in the first Divission in the great neck Allso the one half a forty five acre Lot being the Tenth in number Adjoyning to the afores^d Eleventh lott being the southerly half as it is now divided And allso the one halfe of forty eight acre lott being y^e Thirteenth lott in the afores^d division yet undivided in partnership with William Slead and allso a small lott or Addetion of about three acres more or less Included within the Bounderyes of s^d ffarm Lyeing within or below said High as may more fully appear upon the Records kept for the Propriet^{rs} of s^d Shawomett Purchass To which these presents have Speciall Refference for the more perticular bounds of s^d lotts of land Together with all buildings ffences orchards & all profits priviledges & appur^{cs}

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allso one share or Right in the eighty acres in s^d Shawomet layd out for the use of the ministry or use of the Proprietors in s^d Shawomet To Have and to Hold all the said Tennement Messuage or farm above granted with all the s^d Appurtenances & s^d Share in said Eighty Acres unto him the s^d Preserved Brayton his heires & assignes forever To his and their sole proper use benefit and behooff forever free & cleare and clearely acquited & Dyscharged off and from all other and former gifts grants bargaines sales Titles Troubles Charges and Encumbrances What so ever and I the said William Little do covenant Grant and agree to & with the s^d Preserved Brayton his heires and assignes that I have good right full power and lawfull authoritie to grant bargain & confirm the above said premises with the Appurtenances unto the said Brayton his heires and assignes forever And Do Warrant & Engage to maintaine the sale above and to defend the s^d Preserved Brayton his heires and assigns in his & theire quiet & peaceable emjoyment of the premises Against the Leagall Claimes & Demands of all persons whatsoever In witness whereof I the said William Little have hereunto set my Hand and seal this first day of March Anno Domini 1714

15

Memorandon the word (by Preserved Brayton late of Portsmouth in Rhoad Island now of Swansey in the

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County of Bristol) between the fourth & fifth lines of
this Instrument were enterd before signeing

Signed, sealed & delivered

in presence of us William Little (S)

Ephraim Cole Jun^r

Lemuel Little

The successive changes of ownership of the lots contained within these bounds, and also the phrases employed in these articles of agreement in which Isaac Little and his son William are called "of Marshfield" or "of Plymouth," lead us to believe that heretofore no dwelling had been erected upon the land, and that the soil had received little if any tillage. We do not know how much of this land was overgrown with forests which Preserved Brayton cleared away, yet we can rightly judge that many acres were covered with rocks similar to those in some of the adjoining fields today, and which are of a peculiar formation of special interest to the geologist; instead of the or-

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dinary stone formation, these rocks, called conglomerates or pudding-stone, are composed of small stones held together by fine rock material which has hardened into a sort of cement. "Their presence in certain places is a lost page in Geology."

While we are uncertain of the exact date when the first house was built, we find evidence of its foundation upon which site has been placed a stone, presumably the old stepping stone of the original dwelling. "The Great Room," "in the Southeast corner," "the chamber over said rooms," "the great door," "through the entry and up the stairs to the chamber overhead," "to cook in the Kitchen," and "store meat and sauce in the cellar," form for us only a fragmentary description of that first house upon the hill to which Preserved Brayton brought his wife and two older children, and which was the birthplace of his younger children.

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In 1724, Preserved Brayton enlarged his farm by purchasing of William Slade the south half of the original lot 13 and half the roadway between the 13th and 14th lots, thus making the whole of the Homestead Farm about one hundred and sixty-eight acres. The deed of this sale reads as follows:—

To all People to whom this Present Deed of sale shall come I William Slade of Showomock Purchase in ye County of bristol in ye province of the masachusits bay in newengland yeoman sendeth greeting &c Know ye that I ye sd William Slade for and in consideration of the sum of three Hundred & thirty pounds in Currant money of said newengland to me in hand well & truly Paid by Preserved Brayton of sd Showomock Purchase in the County and Province aforesd in sd newengland yeoman the Recept whereof I do hereby acknowledg and ye sd Preserved Brayton his heirs executors & administrators hereof and of every patr & persel hereof acquitted & Discharged Have & by these Presents Do for myself and my heirs fully freely and absolutely Give Grant Bargain sell aline enfeofe and Confirm unto him ye sd Preserved Brayton his heirs

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and assigns forever one half of ye thirteenth Lot ye whole Lot being forty five acors in it and a high way of four Rods wide Lying between ye Aforesd thirteenth Lot and the fourteenth Lot being in sd Showomock in ye County afore the above sd Lands are bounded as fully appears in ye Book of Records Keep for ye Proprietors of sd Showomock to which these Presents have Reference to for bounds.

To have and to hold the above Land with all ye fensing timber wood and all what so is on sd Lands with all and singular ye Rights Priviledges and appurtenances thereunto belonging to him ye sd Preserved Brayton his heirs & assigns forever to his and there alone Proper use benifit & behoof forever and I ye sd William Slade Do by these Presents avouch myself to be at ye time of the ensealing and til ye Delivery of these presents to have a good and Lawful title to ye above Demised Premises and do by these Presents bind & oblige myself & my heirs to warrant ye sd Demised Premises unto the above sd Preserved brayton his heirs & assigns in the quiet and Peasable injoyment of the same to Defend against ye Lawfull Clames and Demands of all Persons whatsoever.

In Witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal this fifth Day of August one thousand seven hundred & twenty four and in ye eleventh year of his majesties Reign George King of Great Britten &c

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Signed, sealed & Delivered William Slad (S)
in ye Presents of us
Abraham Anthony
William Anthony

The total purchase price of the farm, as paid by Preserved Brayton, was, therefore, thirteen hundred and twenty pounds. Assuming that the colonial pound (whose value today would be about three and one third dollars) was used in these transactions, the amount paid for the Homestead Farm would be about forty-four hundred dollars of our money.

Preserved Brayton was a true lover of the soil, and for forty-seven years after his removal to Swansea, as we shall now call it, was spared to enjoy the fruits of his labors upon the place he termed the Homestead Farm, all unconscious of adopting a name that would be perpetuated for so many generations. At the time of his death in Swansea on May 21,

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1761, Preserved Brayton was an extensive landholder, as the following copy of his will proves to us:—

I, Preserved Brayton of Swansey in the County of Bristol and Province of the Massachusetts Bay in New England Yoeman being infirm in Body but of a well and sound desposing Mind and Memory, God be thanked I do make and ordain this my Last Will and Testament in the following Manner and Form Viz—

Imprimis I will that all my just Debts and funeral Charges be paid by my Executor hereafter named.

Item. I give and bequeath to my Grand Daughter Elizabeth Robbinson Daughter of my son John Brayton deceased the Sum of one thousand pounds Bills of Credit of Rhode Island Currency old tenor five hundred pounds one year after my decease and five hundred pounds two years after my decease to be paid by my son Israel Brayton I also give her a certain piece of land lying in Freetown in the Freemen's Purchase as by deed may appear Containing fifty acres, to her & her assigns forever.

Item. I give and bequeath to my grandson Preserved Brayton son of my son Stephen Brayton deceased a certain Farm commonly known by the name

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of Rock River Farm lying in Rehoboth where my son Stephen did dwell bounded as followeth; beginning at a Great Rock a little westerly of the Mill, then westerly a strait line to a stone stuck upon the Ditch on the west side of the High Way, from thence on a strait line to a cedar stuck in the Marsh and then by Palmer River, southerly till it cometh to Simon Burr's land and then easterly by Burr's land to the High Way and so across said Way and by a lane that leads from said Way to John Kingsley's land and from thence by his land to the south end of the Mill Dam and from said dam to the Great Rock first mentioned with all the buildings and priveledges to the same belonging with a certain wood lot which I bought of Samuel Bullock, to him his heirs & assigns forever, he delivering to his Mother two loads of salt hay every year during her widowhood.

Item. I give and devise to my grandson Stephen Brayton son of my son Stephen Brayton deceased, a certain piece of land which I bought of John Barney together with a piece of land lying on the west side of the highway from a stone stuck in the ditch on a strait line to a cedar stake stuck on the Marsh and so by the River as it runs to a lot of land formerly John Miller's, easterly to the highway, so along the way to a stone stuck in the ground, thence across the way to a stone stuck in the ground, from thence on a strait

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line to a Great Rock near the mill and from said Rock to the south end of the dam and by the River untill it cometh to Aarin Kingsleys land and so by said Kingsleys Land untill it cometh to Rounds land, and so by Rounds land down to the highway, so by said way to a stone set in the ground together with the house and mill and dam and all the preveledges to support the mill and all other preveledges to the same belonging to him his heirs and assigns forever, he delivering to his mother one load of salt hay every year during her widowhood.

Item. I give and bequeath equally to be divided to my four grandchildren the children of my son Stephen Brayton deceased and to each of their heirs and assigns forever three lots of land I bought of Joseph Allen lying in Swansey as by deed may appear.

Item. I give and bequeath to my son Baulston Brayton his heirs and assigns forever all that my farm lying in Smithfield in the Rhoad Island Colony where he now dwells which I bought of James Angell as more at large appears by deed together with all priviledges to the same belonging he paying his assigned legacies and I also give him one thousand dollars and three thousand pounds in bills of credit Old tenor of the Colony of Rhoad Island; and he shall pay to my grandson Stephen Brayton two thousand and four hundred pounds in like bills of old tenor Rhoad Island

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currency when he cometh to age of twenty one years and my son Baulston shall have the use of my grandson Stephen's land and mill untill he cometh to the age of twenty one years.

Item. My will is that if my grandson Stephen should die before he cometh to the age of twenty one years or with out issue his brother Preserved shall have his portion.

Item. I give and bequeath to my son Israel Brayton and to his heirs and assigns forever all this my Homestead Farm and all the priviledges to the same belonging and all my living stock and farming tools and tackling and my negro man Cuffe and negro man Ned and negro woman Floris and negro boy Moses; I also give him all my farm in Swansea in the Purchase of Sewomit between the land of James Luther and the land where John Reed did dwell with all the priviledges to the same belonging to him his heirs and assigns forever. I also give him all my moveable estate in my house excepting what I shall otherwise despose of in this my last will and testament and three hundred and ninety two dollars which Samuel Lee Jr. oweth me upon note.

Item. I give to my daughter Content Gardner one silver Tankard six silver porringers and twelve silver spoons and eight hundred dollars, to her or her legal representatives.

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Item. I give to my several grand-daughters ten dollars apiece that is to say my executor shall pay to each and every one of my grand-daughters as they come to the age of eighteen years and if any of them should die before they come to the age of eighteen years my will is that the surviving sisters of the same family should have their part.

Item. I give all my apparel equally to my sons namely Baulston and Israel Brayton.

I also give all the rest and residue of my estate to my three children equally that is to say to Baulston Brayton. Israel Brayton and Content Gardner and to their heirs and assigns forever.

Finally I do make constitute and ordain my two sons Baulston Brayton and Israel Brayton to be the sole executors of this my last will and testament. In witness whereof I the said Preserved Brayton have set my hand and seal this seventh day of December Anno Domini 1759.

| | | |
|---------------|---|-------------------|
| Joshua Mason | } | Preserved Brayton |
| Allen Chase | | |
| Russell Mason | | |

witnesses

From this we readily learn why Israel, the youngest son, inherited the Homestead Farm. Preserved's wife and their children Ann and

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David were not living; their sons John and Stephen had also died, leaving their families established elsewhere; their daughter Content had married and moved away; their son Baulston was already a resident of Smithfield, Rhode Island; while Israel, their youngest child, was still a young man and had not left Swansea, although he had married and may not have lived on the farm at that time.

Israel Brayton, son of Preserved and Content Brayton, was born on the Homestead Farm, October 13, 1727, and on April 19, 1752, married Mary Perry, who, tradition claims, was a relative of Oliver Hazard Perry. Israel, like his father, was a holder of lands and a tiller of the soil. In addition to the Homestead Farm, he acquired other property in Swansea, including a shipyard and land he purchased in 1766 from Samuel Lee. In 1759 he bought from Richard and Susanna Gifford a large farm of one hundred and eighty acres

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in Tiverton, which, at the time of his death, he gave to his son Baulston Brayton.

Israel had profited by his father's constant toil of almost half a century. Land that had been so thickly covered with boulders had been transformed into productive acreage, the forests had been cleared of the underbrush, the growth of centuries, and the improvements commenced by the father were continued by the son.

The births of the children of Israel and Mary (Perry) Brayton are found upon the Swansea records and their marriages may be of interest to those familiar with the cognomens of that town, showing, as they do, the uniting of many of its prominent and familiar names. Content married Captain Nathan Read, son of William; John, born April 12, 1762, married Sarah Bowers, daughter of Philip; Mary married Philip Bowers, brother of Sarah; Bethany became the first wife of

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Dr. John Winslow; Baulston married Mercy Slade, daughter of John; David and Perry died in their youth; while no records have been found in regard to the children Israel and Preserved.

Israel Brayton married, for his second wife, Mrs. Mary Read Bowers, (sister of Nathan Read) mother of Sarah and Philip Bowers mentioned above, and their children, Nathan Read and Perry Bowers (twins) and Nancy, died before reaching their majority.

It is impossible to chronicle the events in the daily life of Israel Brayton who died, presumably upon the Homestead Farm, in the year 1791. His widow, Mrs. Mary (Read Bowers) Brayton, married, for her third husband, Ebenezer Dean of Taunton.

By will dated April 13, 1784, Israel Brayton gives, "To my son John Brayton and to his heirs and assigns forever all this my homestead farm with all the priviledges to

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the same belonging with two thirds of all my living stock he paying what I do order him to pay in this will," and "I also give my said wife the use and improvement of one third part of all my real estate." In 1792, Mary Brayton, widow of Israel, gave to John Brayton all right to her third in the Homestead Farm.

The life of John Brayton held more diversified interests than those of his parents or grandparents. Before entering his teens the atmosphere was filled with the spirit of unrest, and although he was just thirteen when the War of the Revolution broke out, and therefore too young to enlist, he could not help being interested in the subject uppermost in the hearts of the people. Again the Homestead Farm was on the route of travel. The fort, called Fort Barton, built on Tiverton Heights, commanded a wide-spread view of the British stationed at Bristol Ferry, and

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was a rendezvous for the American troops, ten thousand of whom were quartered there at one time. Many of the troops, on their way to Tiverton, crossed the Taunton River at Slade's ferry and thus came very near the home of Israel Brayton. One night a company camped not far distant and the next morning, in filling their canteens, drew the well dry at the Homestead Farm. One canteen, accidentally left, is now in existence and is in the possession of one of the present owners of the Homestead Farm, the great-great-grandson of Israel.

The war brought great deprivation to the inhabitants of the towns round about and, in 1779, there was a great scarcity of provisions, and these sold at very high prices. The following winter the intense cold caused much suffering and for two months the ice completely locked the rivers and bay. The price of wood advanced to twenty dollars per cord and

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corn sold at four silver dollars a bushel. It was during this winter that John Brayton, not yet eighteen years of age, "Loaded wood upon sleds at his farm and with oxen drew the same in a direct line upon the ice to Newport."

We find that his youthful interest in the Revolutionary War continued and when only eighteen years old he enlisted, on August 2, 1780, in Captain Peleg Peck's Company of Colonel Thomas Carpenter's regiment.

On September 21, 1782, John Brayton married Sarah Bowers, the daughter of Philip Bowers, a lineal descendant of three of the passengers who came to America on the first voyage of the Mayflower in 1620. The records of the eleven children of John and Sarah (Bowers) Brayton were as follows:—(1). Mary married, as his second wife, Dr. John Winslow. They had ten children, one of whom became the first wife of Jonathan Slade and lived upon the farm adjoining the Brayton

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Homestead. (2). Sarah married Benjamin Clark Cornell. Their daughter married Charles Hull Norton, and lived in Ohio. (3). William Bowers, born February 2, 1788, was drowned at sea January 16, 1805. (4). Nancy Jaret Bowers became the second wife of David Anthony. Their children were Lauretta Bishop Wheaton, James Monroe, and Frederic Augustus Anthony. (5). Israel Brayton born July 29, 1792, mentioned later. (6). Betsey W. died in the fifth year of her age. (7). Content died in Fall River, February 6, 1872, in her seventy-fifth year. She never married. (8). Stephen married, first, Mary H. Gray and, second, her sister, Abby Gray. His children Mary H. and William G. died in infancy, and his son, John Gray Brayton, died in California in 1903, unmarried. (9). John Jr. died in his youth. (10). Caroline was ten years old at the time of her death. (11). Almira married Captain Jesse Chace. They had

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three children: Elizabeth Collins Chace, who married Anson B. Ives; John Brayton Chace, who died young; and Almira Felicia Agnes Chace, who died in Newport, R. I. January 13, 1898, unmarried.

In 1790, the town of Somerset was set apart from Swansea so that the births of the three oldest children are found upon the Swansea records and those of the younger ones occurred in the town of Somerset. We have now located the Brayton Homestead in three different places, namely: Shawomet, which was conquered from the Indians during King Philip's War; Swansea (incorrectly spelled Swansey and Swansey, as it was named for the town of Swansea in Wales) to which Shawomet had been annexed; and Somerset, its present name, which was set apart from Swansea in 1790, and which, in the sketch of Somerset by Avery P. Slade, we are told was named in honor of Mrs. Jarathmael Bowers, the home of whose girl-



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(North East View)

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hood was Somerset Square, Boston.

John Brayton, finding the dwelling of his parents and grandparents inadequate, decided to erect a new home for his growing family. The site was selected and the present house was built about 1796. Although not commanding as extensive a view of the Bay, it was more accessible to the ferry and highway which had been opened; yet we should remember that the first road was upon the crest of the hill and therefore the first entrance must have been from the west so that the original house was equally convenient in its location.

The plates give us an idea of the exterior, and within we find the arrangement of the rooms similar to other dwellings of that period. We do not know just how long the original house stood upon the hill, but early in the last century a part of it was moved near the new house and can be remembered by

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many of us familiar with the farm in later years.

In 1802, eighteen years after the establishment of the Methodist Church in America, one was organized in the southern part of Somerset, and in 1804 a chapel was built near the site of the church now standing at the corner of Read Street and Brayton Point Road. Although not one of the seven original founders of that church, John Brayton was the first person to join after its organization and he became one of its most useful and influential members. He contributed generously to its support and extended cordial hospitality to the itinerant ministers. At the Centenary Celebration of that church held March 2, 1902, as a memorial to John Brayton, his grandchildren and great-grandchildren gave to the church the sum of fifteen hundred dollars, the income to be used for the support of the gospel.

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John Brayton did not round out the allotted three score years and ten, but died March 12, 1829, in his sixty-seventh year. Although he did not extend the Homestead Farm beyond the bounds of his inheritance, we find from the inventory of his estate that the area of this farm was one hundred and seventy-five acres, a difference of about seven acres which may have been adjusted in the more accurate survey of more modern times. We also learn, that not only had he taken interest in the cultivation of the soil, but also in raising live stock on a small scale and, at the time of his death, had thirty-four head of cattle and sixty sheep in addition to several horses. The farm was well equipped with tools, the stores in the cellar were still abundant after the long winter, and the house was well furnished with what are now considered choice antiques.

John Brayton left no will, so that his widow

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and children acquired the Homestead Farm by the right of inheritance. We assume that the son Stephen assisted his mother in the oversight of the farm until his death in 1832, after which the responsibility fell upon the son Israel. Between December 1833 and March 1837, the heirs of John Brayton, except Sarah his widow, sold their interests in the Homestead Farm, one to the other, which ultimately came into the possession of their brother Israel and here he established his residence with his wife and children. After the death of Sarah Bowers Brayton, widow of John, which occurred on the farm August 17, 1843, Israel Brayton became its sole proprietor.

On August 19, 1813, Israel Brayton had married Kezia Anthony, the daughter of David and Submit Wheeler Anthony. The marriage took place at the Anthony Homestead on Lees River Avenue, Somerset, which

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was bought about 1703 by her paternal ancestor, William Anthony, whose wife Mary was sister of Content Coggeshall, the wife of Preserved Brayton, the first occupant of the Brayton Homestead.

The nine children of Israel and Kezia Anthony Brayton were as follows:—

(1). Mary, who married 1st. Major Bradford Durfee, 2nd. Rev. Jeremiah S. Young. She had one son, Bradford Matthew Chaloner Durfee, who died, unmarried, in his thirtieth year.

(2). William Bowers, who married Hannah T. Lawton, of Tiverton. Their children were Julia Washburn, George Anthony, Mary, and William Bowers Brayton.

(3). Nancy Jarrett Bowers, who married Daniel Chace of Somerset. Their only child, Charles Bradford, died in his youth.

(4). Elizabeth Anthony, who married Rev. Roswell Dwight Hitchcock, a native of Maine.

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Their children were Harriet Washburn, Roswell Dwight, Mary Brayton, and Bradford Washburn Hitchcock.

(5). David Anthony, who married Nancy R. Jenckes of Fall River. Their children were Nannie Jenckes, David Anthony, John Jenckes, Elizabeth Hitchcock, and Dana Dwight Brayton.

(6). John Summerfield, who married Sarah J. Tinkham of Middleborough. Their children were Mary Jarette, Harriet Hitchcock, and John Summerfield Brayton.

(7). Israel Perry, who married Parthenia Gardner of Somerset. They had two children. Their oldest daughter, Nancy Jarrett Bowers, is the only lineal descendant of Preserved Brayton, of this generation, who can claim the Brayton Homestead as the place of her birth. Their other daughter, Sarah Chaloner, was born in Swansea.

(8). Hezekiah Anthony, who married

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Caroline E. Slade of Somerset. Their children were Caroline Slade, Abby Slade, William Lawton Slade, Israel, Mary Durfee, Stanley, Arthur Perry, Margaret Lee, Dorothy, and Katharine Brayton.

(9). Sarah Submit, unmarried, who is the only surviving child of Israel and Kezia Anthony Brayton.

During the first years of their residence in Somerset the sons in turn assisted their father in carrying on the farm. Within a short time, however, they formed business interests elsewhere and one after another left home, eventually locating in Fall River, except Israel Perry who returned to the farm where he resided for a few years after his marriage.

Israel Brayton, although now following the occupation of his forefathers, did not relinquish all interest in the associations formed during his residence in Swansea and Fall River. He continued his membership in the

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Central Congregational Church of that city and was one of its most regular attendants, even after his removal to Somerset. After a useful and honorable life he died upon the Homestead Farm November 5, 1866. The following is a copy of an article printed in the Fall River News November 9, 1866:—

“The funeral services of Israel Brayton, Esq., took place yesterday forenoon, at his late residence in South Somerset. There was a very large attendance of relatives, neighbors and friends, from this city, Somerset and other places. The religious services at the house, which were very appropriate and impressive, were conducted by the Rev. Mr. Hyde, of the Methodist church, South Somerset, and the Rev. Dr. Thurston, of this city, of whose church Mr. Brayton was a member. The Rev. Dr. Hitchcock, of New York, a son-in-law of Mr. Brayton, offered prayer at the grave. It was a scene long to be remembered, as the family and friends gathered around the grave on that serene and most beautiful Indian summer morning, and united with bowed heads and sympathizing hearts in the simple, heartfelt, and deeply impressive prayer which was there offered; and we could but feel

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how grand a lesson is taught us when a good man is called from earth to heaven; a man who has filled the measure of his days in his Master's service, and whose memory will be cherished by his friends and kindred as among the best of earthly treasures."

Many changes occurred in the fifteen years which followed the death of Israel Brayton. For over one hundred and fifty years, from 1724 when the last lot was added to the farm until 1875, no additions had been made to its acreage, neither had any been taken away. The farm extended from the highway on the west to the river on the east, unbroken by any roads save by the cart paths of their own making.

With more modern times the advancement from a ferry boat to a bridge proved necessary and the first structure of its kind across Taunton River, since known as Slade's Ferry Bridge, was planned. The site chosen for its western terminus was upon the Homestead

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Farm, midway of its eastern boundary. The result was a combination bridge, with the section for traffic and pedestrians below, while on top ran the steam cars of the Old Colony Railroad. This bridge was completed and opened to the public on January 4, 1876.

The approaches to it from the south, the north, and the northwest, all new roads, necessarily had to cross the Homestead Farm, and for their construction two hundred and twenty rods, one hundred and sixty-one rods, and two hundred and two rods, respectively, were sold to the town of Somerset, the last forming a part of the road now called Brayton Avenue. Seven hundred rods were also sold to the railroad for its extension toward its former terminus at the south ferry, and upon this land the railroad established a small station, called Brayton.

Upon the farm new fences and walls were built; many trees were set out, including the

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row of stately elms extending from the house to the bridge; some of the old buildings were taken down; and other incidental improvements made.

Kezia Anthony Brayton, widow of Israel, was the last of the family to reside permanently upon the Homestead Farm, where she died on October 24, 1880, in her eighty-ninth year. At that time she was said to be the oldest person in the town of Somerset.

For some time after her death the household furnishings were not disturbed, and during several summers the family continued to make the Homestead Farm the scene of occasional re-unions, reluctant to give up all associations with the old home. The last of those gatherings occurred in the summer of 1889, and some time afterward the rooms, so long unoccupied, were dismantled of their treasures, which were distributed among the children and grandchildren. A few of the ar-

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ticles were—the Brayton family Bible dated 1772, which was given to Sarah Brayton (wife of John) by her uncle Benjamin Bowers; the Pembroke table; the wooden cradle, with its hood marked “M. R. 1728,” from the Read-Bowers line; the old tall clock, which had for generations marked the passing of time; great-great-grandmother Dean’s writing desk; the carved high four-poster; the Read pepper box; several mirrors and innumerable chairs of antique designs; the old brass andirons; the Revolutionary canteen, previously mentioned; and many other choice pieces, each with its history.

Since that time, the house has been occupied by the farmer, to whom the care of the farm is entrusted.

Israel Brayton left no will and this farm was not divided for thirteen years after the death of his widow. During that time, however, the sons William, David, and Israel

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Perry, or their heirs, sold their interests to other members of the family. By will, the daughter Mary, who died in 1891, left two-eighths of the Homestead Farm to her brother Hezekiah, the same to go to his sons Israel and Arthur after his death, and her remaining one-eighth to her brother John.

In 1893 the first division of the farm was made among those in whose names, either by direct inheritance, by purchase, or by bequest, the property still remained. At that time the dividing lines were definitely defined and each owner acquired title to a specified part, which was partitioned, not by equal acreage but by valuation.

After the death of the daughter Elizabeth Hitchcock, her inheritance became the property of her son Bradford, who some years afterward sold it to his cousin Stanley Brayton; and after his death his parents deeded it to his brother Arthur, the present owner. After the

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death of the son John his three-eighths interest, which included the northeast section of the Homestead Farm with the buildings thereon, came into the possession of his son John, its present owner. The son Hezekiah deeded his part inherited from his father to his son Israel, to whom the daughter Sarah also transferred her interest in the farm.

Thus we see that the Homestead Farm, although still belonging to the Brayton name, is not intact. This land which fifty years ago stood in the name of Israel Brayton alone, is today divided among three of his grandchildren, John Summerfield, Israel, and Arthur Perry Brayton.

The ownership of the Brayton Homestead has now been traced from the time the red men claimed its title to the present day, and in so doing the tradition which has come to us, that it came into the Brayton name directly from the Indians, has been destroyed.

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Let us today visit the farm, entering from the road upon the crest of the hill. The forests have been cleared away long since, save for a small acreage of timber known as "The Brayton Woods," a grove of tall oak trees, partially cleared of its underbrush, and between whose boughs we see one large boulder of conglomerate rock, the picnic scene of by-gone years. The land north of the grove is still untilled, and from its bushes are gathered, in the late summer, most delicious berries. Going eastward, we see cultivated fields, some with growing corn or potatoes, while others are kept for grazing purposes, but the greater part of the land is used for raising hay for the cattle in winter. In our walk we come to a very small plot of ground enclosed by a granite curbing, and we at once wonder at its presence, so remote its location and so undefined its purpose. Within this enclosure are buried the slaves who had been the faithful family

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servants for years. Possibly here lie "Cuffe," "Ned," "Floris," and "Moses" mentioned in Preserved Brayton's will, and also Rose and Ginnie whose names have come down to us through generations. Israel Brayton, in his will made in 1784, made no mention of slaves, so we presume that they were no longer owned at the farm.

After passing a few cattle grazing upon the hillside, our attention is drawn to the buildings upon the farm, which are built within a small area, that they may be more accessible. They include the hay barn, stable, two cribs, shed and poultry houses, in addition to the house, which is naturally the centre of attraction, substantial and dignified in its new white paint and green blinds.

Here we pause and note the many changes which have been made on and about the farm during the past thirty-five years. The stable and poultry houses have been erected; the



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(North View)

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well-sweep has been taken down; the large old English walnut tree, under whose branches the tables, bountifully supplied for the family gatherings, were formerly spread, is no longer in sight; many maple trees have been set along the roads; electric cars now run upon Brayton and Riverside Avenues, thus affording direct communication with Fall River, Swansea and Somerset; telephone poles have been erected, electric lights installed, and gas pipes laid in Somerset so that many conveniences of a city are now accessible.

For the purpose of abolishing the grade crossing at Wilbur Avenue, and in anticipation of a new bridge, the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad, the lessee of the Old Colony Railroad, purchased in 1911, about one hundred and sixty-eight rods of land from the owners of the Homestead Farm. Upon a part of this, at the north and west of the railroad track, now equipped with elec-

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tricity, has been constructed a new highway, which will soon be under control of the State, as are Brayton and Riverside Avenues.

We now recall with much pleasure the last re-union held here on June 17, 1911. Our thoughts were filled with reminiscences which we, now the older generation, took delight in relating to the children, some of whom had never before visited this home of their ancestors, where we had spent so many happy hours of our youth. Over twenty years had passed since those frequent family gatherings and our hearts were touched with sadness as we missed the faces of our loved ones who had shared those pleasures with us.

As we retrace our steps and look once more across these acres, we are impressed with our incomplete knowledge of the lives of our ancestors and long for an insight into the past. The stone walls, dividing the fields into pastures of various dimensions, are mute remin-

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ders of the labors of five generations. Just when the first stones were laid in their foundations we know not, yet some time in their early history "God's Acre," which we see in a quiet spot upon the hillside, must have been set apart.

"I like that ancient Saxon phrase, which calls
The burial-ground God's Acre! It is just,
It consecrates each grave within its walls,
And breathes a benison o'er the sleeping dust."

We find within this enclosure today twenty-three of those early graves marked only by the low slate stones which indicate their position, while inscriptions are carved upon the more recent ones in memory of John Brayton; Sarah, his wife; Content; John Jr.; Caroline; Betsey W.; Stephen; Mary, his wife; Israel; and Kezia, his wife. Upon the stone of John Brayton is also a record of his son William's death at sea, and upon Stephen's stone that

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of his daughter Mary H. who died in her youth.

We shall never know who first was buried within these walls but many of us recall that last solemn service held on October 28, 1880 when our grandmother Kezia Anthony Brayton was laid beside her husband. Let us remember that those who rest here held in deep affection this farm, which was to them in truth their home, to us the home of our ancestors, and to the community, for generations, "The Brayton Homestead."

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Fall River, Massachusetts



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